

HISTORY – CHAPTER 1

COLONY TO EARLY REPUBLIC

PRESENTATION BY PROF JOANNE PASSAT

(**Abstract:** Political and cultural context of colonial (pre-independence) history, Slavery, lead-up to Revolutionary War, post-Revolutionary War period, pedagogy in the study of history and teaching methodologies.)

PROFESSOR PASSET: US history as you know covers about 500 years. My colleague, who teaches world history, makes a lot of fun of me because he says, you're only doing about 500 years, look at all of what I do. Being here this week is definitely going to be a two-way exchange. I'm really looking forward to that aspect of the week a lot, because I'm very conscious of the need to globalise the US history curriculum, which is a trend in the United States. I need to do a lot of work on that myself and I think that being here is going to be an important factor in helping me do that and learning more about your history.

When I start teaching US history, I normally cover “part 1” in 14 weeks and even then I feel that I don’t have enough time to cover everything in any depth at all. I must start out with a very cursory look at America's beginning. I usually talk briefly about how the earliest known people on the North American continent came across the bearing straights from Asia and I try to impress upon the students that a very diverse culture emerged in North and Central America during this time period – that it was rich, it was flourishing. I try to get across the idea of the complexity of the culture, the written records that they were keeping, the fact there were written forms of communication, extensive trade networks, and religious complexity. I try to expose them to the Aztec and Mayan cultures, also coming through time to the Eastern Woodland Indians and other groups of Native Americans in North America. This way, we bring them up to about the 15th Century, when there is the point of contact with Europe. You know, of course there were other discoverers of North America, like Leif Ericsson. We then get to the point about the significance of Columbus's “discovery of America.”

This “discovery” is controversial today because obviously the Native Americans were there before he arrived. But Columbus had the advantage of technology -- “discovering” North America after the invention of the printing press. Anyone here in media studies knows how significant it is to be able to publicize your discovery. So, Columbus wrote a letter, which was printed and circulated throughout Europe with his impression of North America and the Native Americans and the flora and the fauna. This presented the “new world” as a paradise and made it appealing.

The technology -- sailing and navigation and firearms -- had a tremendous impact on the diverse population living in North and Central America. Ronald Tokai (sic) has written a multi-cultural history of America that seeks to present

American history from the perspective of the people who were here and their perceptions of the first encounters with Europeans; looking at the ships, seeing them as floating islands, seeing the first European to come to the shore, some saw them as gods.

One consequence of that meeting was the population of America diminished from about 20 million to two million within a relatively short period of time. This was partly a result of warfare and exploitation. But there was also a tremendous unintentional impact of disease, because the people living in North America had no immunity to many of the diseases in Europe. Rats came from ships and other diseases were transmitted by people. Columbus took 400 Native Americans as slaves as well as plants and animals back to Europe, so both European and North American cultures were enriched as well as negatively impacted by the exchange. Other European nations also became interested in colonising North America as a result of the publicity and the promise of North America.

Spain had the most success in the beginning. But the French became quite interested in new trade opportunities, especially fur. French fur traders and trappers went to the northern parts of North America and were much more successful at intermingling with the Native Americans. They realized the benefit of learning the skills of skinning and trading. They often intermarried with Native American women. Women served as intermediaries between different cultures with the French traders and trappers. And there was a religious intermingling.

So there was a lot of successful mixing with the French. The Dutch did not have as much interest in colonizing in North America. The British were slower to get into the race because they were engaged in other wars in Europe and they were finally drawn in in the late 1500's. You begin to see competing nations looking at North America as a potential source of wealth and expansion.

The Native Americans, of course, responded in several different ways, they could ally, as some of them did, with the French. They could resist through fighting, and they could also flee. One of the questions that I deal with in my classes a lot is; "why enslave African people, why did they not enslave Native Americans, because there were so many there?" But one of the advantages the Native Americans had was they were familiar with the terrain of North America and they were very mobile so they could easily escape inland away from any efforts to enslave them.

The origins of Colonial Culture. The Chesapeake Bay was a good place for ships to come in and so settlements in the Chesapeake region were established in 1607. This was not, of course, the first settlement in North America, but the first British settlement in North America. And it was established solely with the idea of profit. Many of the early settlers were gentlemen, lacking any kind of practical skills to be colonists. In fact, they brought servants with them that they expected would do the work for them. But this was a disaster. They struggled with illnesses because they didn't realise they were settling in a swampy Malaria- infested region.

They also had many conflicts with the Powhattan Indians. There were about 14,000 Powhattan Indians in the Chesapeake area compared to at any one time initially less than 1,000 colonists. The turning point in the Chesapeake region, and

this is significant to the region's culture, was the discovery of tobacco as a crop that could be very marketable. They sent their first shipment of tobacco to Europe in 1613 and from there on tobacco became the driving force of the Chesapeake Bay area's economy. Tobacco ironically saved the colony from extinction because tobacco is a labor- and land-intensive crop. It depletes the soil when you repeatedly plant tobacco and so they had to expand inland. That drew them out of the Malaria area and into more healthy climates.

So tobacco was a factor there but it also was the driving factor that led them later to embrace slavery. Because it was labor-intensive they had to have many
10 people to work the tobacco. As they expanded, even greater conflicts erupted with the Native Americans.

I usually stress some of the differences: in the southern part of the US the conflict with the Native Americans was harsher than it was in New England and in the colonies to the north. Also, a small planter elite emerged in the Chesapeake Bay area and also would emerge in the southern part of the colonies. And the one-crop economy plays out a little differently in different colonies.

Along with tobacco in Virginia and Maryland, indigo became a crop in some of the colonies, as well as rice in the Carolinas. The cultivation and the knowledge of how to cultivate rice would in the future be brought to the colonies by slaves
20 from West Africa.

Labor. At that point, the colonists in Virginia relied on a system of indentured servitude. England was an island nation that was dumping excess population, especially its undesirable population, emptying its debtor's prisons, etc. So these were the people who were most likely to come to Virginia and Maryland as indentured servants.

Indentured servitude involved a contract where you worked for four to seven years to pay your passage to the new world. You were at the beck and call of your masters, for four to seven years, and then at the end of that term, you would be given a new suit of clothing, you were promised some land and you were given
30 some grain to plant, so that you could go on and become self-sufficient.¹ The reason that this form of labor worked well for the Colonists was that because of the high mortality rates, initially they were not having to pay out the 50 acres of land to what they call the "freemen." And so they could just get more indentured servants coming to the colonies.

Meanwhile the first Africans had been brought to Virginia in 1619 and they were initially not seen as slaves. They had an ambiguous status. People often think they were brought as slaves, but some were indentured servants and some more slaves. Slavery was not seen as a viable form of labor initially because of the high mortality rate. So, from a planter's point of view, it was more costly to buy a
40 slave, especially if both of them are going to die at a relatively young age. In 1650, 75% of the population in the colonies were indentured servants or had been

¹ Author's note: At this point I ask my students in class, "how many of you would like to have done that?" and I would say that probably 90% of my students say they would have done it. I teach students who come from a world background and the idea of owning land and being independent is very important to them.

indentured servants.

1680 is usually seen as the turning point for the decision to use slavery as the primary form of labor in southern colonies. From an economic standpoint, after 1680 conditions in England improved and fewer indentured servants were available or even willing to come to the colonies. Not only was there a drying up of indentured servant labor, but also life expectancy was improving and the Africans who had adjusted to the new world were able to live longer periods. That made them a better investment. Also, the planter elite had become concerned about the instability of the population. Because the indentured servants were
10 living out their contracts, they were given land, but the planter elite was giving them less desirable land, moving them further inland. That put them in greater contact with Native Americans. The freemen expected more from the government, including protection, because they saw themselves as land owners with rights and expectations.

The planter elite saw this as a source of tension, that there was a possibility of revolt; that this mass of small land owners might turn against them. And they also suspected that they might unite with the slaves against the planter elite. Therefore the planter elite, after the 1676 Bacon's Rebellion - where people from inland do revolt - decided they needed to have a labor force that they could control.
20 Slaves who could not own arms and who were disenfranchised with no voice in the government offered a labor force that could be controlled.

The planters used race as a dividing line and stressed the similarities between a former indentured servant and the planters and the differences between them and the African and African Americans who were there. At that point racial slavery became the dividing line.

In Virginia, for example, black African status was initially ambiguous; blacks were slaves or servants. Then there was more of a social acceptance of slavery from 1640 to 1660. But after 1660 laws were passed to determine who was a slave and who was not and what rights people had and didn't have. There were
30 free blacks, then, in the colonies who lost rights, who could no longer testify in court or vote or own property; a number of rights were taken away from them so the whites could codify slavery.

Self-reliance and self-government began earlier in the North, particularly in the New England area. Behavior was strictly regulated in New England. People often think of New England as having more equality but actually it was a hierarchy, and people knew exactly where they fit in the hierarchy. As patriarchs, the male at the head of the family was responsible for the family's religion, for example.

Agriculture in New England was limited because of the rocky soil and so
40 they could not have huge plantations and therefore did not need a large supply of labor. Fishing was important in New England. A lot of Africans were involved in ship building in New England which was more self-contained.

Another fascinating thing about New England is that in 1692 there was an outbreak of witchcraft accusations. This is fascinating to my students. In Salem Massachusetts there was a slave from the Caribbean or the West Indies named Tuba who is thought to have introduced certain "practices" to young girls in the

community. These adolescent girls started accusing people of being witches, and the accusations just sky-rocketed. These young girls were accusing many people of being witches, leading to trials, hearings. People were even executed as a result of this.

Historians have looked at the social history of the community for an explanation. Remember that New England was land locked, because westward expansion was difficult because of the Native American presence. During this time, young men were going to the frontier and would be gone four or five years, trying to clear land, trying to make a place for a future. They couldn't marry if
10 they didn't have enough to support a family. The young girls left behind began to look around the community at women who were in vulnerable positions: widows who inherited land, daughters who inherited land, anyone who was a single woman for whatever reason, who had property that could attract a young man back. The young girls also targeted people who were different or eccentric.

So there was an economic basis for these witchcraft accusations. But it also reflected the social and cultural turmoil that came to a head periodically. Finally, the young girls making the accusations accused the judge who had been brought in to hear these cases. And with that he brought a halt to the witchcraft trials.²

Many New Englanders had left Europe for the colonies in order to practice their
20 religion. They ejected anyone who dissented. John Winthrop, who was governor of the colony and also the minister, was not willing to tolerate other religious ideas. During this time, a man named Roger Williams was banished to what became the colony of Rhode Island. A woman named Anne Hudgonson who was the Minister's daughter, was very well educated as a midwife began holding sessions in her home with women and then also with men and women, critiquing Governor Winthrop's sermons. That did not sit well with him and she was also banished. I love to have students read primary documents about her trial so they can understand the minds of the people of that time period.

The Middle Atlantic Colonies, situated between New England and the Southern colonies, were New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. This was a diverse region, with
30 diversity of beliefs among people moved out of New England; a Quaker presence (the Society of Friends who came to Pennsylvania from England and were pacifists and also big in the anti-slavery movement before the civil war). Quakers were there as well as a number of other ethnic groups, German and Dutch, making it a mini regional melting pot.

Differences between the colonies. The middle colonies were in the meantime becoming more urban. North America's cities developed there, especially New York City and Philadelphia. There was also a very large concentration of African Americans in New York City. In the southern colonies there tended to be a single cash crop, no single religious tradition and a move toward African slavery. The middle colonies were very agricultural and because of the Quaker presence treatment of Native Americans was better. New England
40 started out treating Native Americans more equitably, reflecting an initial mutual dependence. But with the need to expand westward, the tensions and the conflicts increased. But in the middle colonies, especially because of the Quakers, there was more of an effort to purchase land. But keep in mind that the Native American's understanding of land ownership and white American's understanding of land ownership were totally different. Native

² Author's note: Pearl Karlson (sic), has written a fascinating study of this whole experience.

Americans were not looking at land as something that you owned; you used it, you cared for it. But the Anglo American wanted to say, this is “my” land.

Seeds of Revolution. In the 18th Century you started to see the seeds of the American Revolution, which are planted through enlightenment influence from Europe and also through the great religious awakening.³

Through the enlightenment ideas of John Locke, North Americans were beginning to have religious doubts, beginning to ask questions, beginning to be skeptical of dogma. At the same time there was some indifference to churches. Remember in North America, the Anglican Church had been established and was receiving support from the State. Great
10 preachers, like George Whitfield, came to the colonies from England. Whitfield brought an emotional, dynamic method of preaching to the colonies. He and other preachers of the great awakening started drawing members from the established churches. He could attract audiences of two or three thousand. And this was taking away from the authority of the churches, it was taking away the money that people were paying to the churches. But another thing is that it was planting the idea of equality in the people. With the great awakening, Whitfield and other preachers taught that God could speak directly to you, you did not need to go through a minister or have an intermediary. This was much like the Quakers' belief system, putting all people on an equal plane. So this seed was planted and spread throughout the minds of colonists, all the way as far south as Georgia.

20 In this era of questioning, there were discussions, new colleges were established because there were more denominations and more religious viewpoints. And there was also a decline in deference to authority, particularly in the south, where the whole system was based on deference to authority.⁴

Conflicting loyalties. Despite the differences that I'm trying to bring out, Americans at this time were paradoxically taking pride in the fact that they were British. They saw themselves as British citizens, they felt pride in their common English ancestry, they were part of a powerful empire. But their attitudes began to change between the period 1762 and 1770. Part of the reason was that for years Britain had let the colonies function autonomously. Britain reaped the benefit of having this colonial empire but was also
30 engaged in four other wars during this period. So there was a certain amount of neglect with the colonies. The colonies developed a sense of having more autonomy, able to manage their own affairs, looking to colonial governments for decision, rather than looking to the empire.

³ Author's note: we used to teach this as the “first” great awakening and then in the 18th Century we talked about the “second” great awakening. But the more we study American religious history the more we see that there were periodic religious awakenings.

⁴ Author's note: In class when I teach this I have the students read primary documents from the three regions, documents from the time period. And then I assign them to [different regions] and I have them confer for a few minutes. And then I bring them all back together and we have a discussion and we throw out questions about how are women treated in their colony and what kind of labor system they have. And I force the students to speak in first person and adopt that persona and I also remove myself from the discussion and make them responsible for the questioning. They soon learn that if they ask a question, they don't have to answer one, at least not at that point. And so we get some very good discussions going in that way. I find the first-person technique works well in understanding the framework

The last of the wars Britain was engaged in was the French and Indian war, seven years of which was fought in North America. As the colonists were drawn into the French and Indian war, they participated as soldiers, they supported the troops, they served as porters for the troops. So there was a certain sense of “we are in this with you.” At the end of the French and Indian war, the Colonists had heightened expectations. Once the war was over and Britain was victorious, they expected that they would be able to expand westwards because France had seeded land all the way to the Mississippi River, never mind the fact that it was already occupied by Native Americans. The Colonists also expected to have a good economy which, during war time produced shortages. They took pride in their contributions to the war effort, and expected to be treated as equal citizens with those living in England.

The British however had different views. The British thought that the Americans had been tight-fisted; that they had not given enough money to support the war. They thought that the Colonial troops were, “Lilly-Livered,” because the British had professional soldiers while the colonies were volunteers, so there was a difference in their skills and their abilities. The colonial volunteers were in fact very skilled at guerrilla warfare and knew the countryside, so that was very important, but the British did not necessarily see that.

And the British also believed that the colonists should pay down the war debt; a war debt which was twice the size of the British budget. The British wanted to pay that down by raising taxes on the colonists. And the Colonists, because the neglect of those earlier years, were not used to paying these taxes. After the French and Indian war, Great Britain started imposing these taxes and asserting their authority over the Colonists.

The Appalachian Mountains run north and south and at this time defined the edge of the 13 colonies a little bit to the west. In 1763, Great Britain established the “Proclamation line” and told the colonists they may not settle beyond it. Western expansion therefore was out, primarily because Native Americans lived there. Britain could not protect its citizens if they went beyond the line; it was impossible to have enough troops to police that large of an area. They also probably realised that once the Colonists started moving westward it would be much harder to control them. There were exceptions, of course, and people did not obey this all the time.

The British also imposed a number of taxes on the Colonists. You're probably familiar with the tea tax and the stamp tax, but there were many different acts many of which affected everyone. In the stamp tax, they put a tax on newspapers, books, any kind of licenses or certificates you needed: your diploma from college, playing cards, any recreational papers of any kind. People resented all of these new taxes that they had to pay for services that they believed they deserved as citizens of the empire.

Growing tensions. From the perspective of the British, they were also paying taxes, so they didn't think that it was a big deal to impose these taxes on the Colonists. But after years of benign neglect, it was harder to accept taxes that hadn't been there before. In New England, which was more of a hot bed for rebellion, the colonists become more and more resentful. Colonial resistance grew. Groups developed, like the “Sons of Liberty.” Sam Adams organised men called the Sons of Liberty; a cross-class organisation.

The Colonists looted and rioted, leading to the Boston Tea Party where the Sons of Liberty dressed up as Native Americans and went aboard a British ship and dumped several thousand pounds of tea into Boston Harbour. Through acts of resistance like burning effigies of tax collectors, they were expressing their discontent.

Women were quite important in the American Revolution because they had to manage affairs while the men were fighting. They also had to boycott British goods as the consumers in the household and to provide alternative goods to replace the British made goods. As a result, women of the day were spinning their own wool instead of relying on imported textiles and so forth. Women also formed groups like the Daughters of Liberty.

One aspect of taxation is particularly galling to the colonists: the British left approximately ten thousand troops behind in North America after the French and Indian War to police the colonies, expecting the Colonists not only to pay for the troops but also to quarter them. Understand that the British colonists believed that “a man's home is his castle.”
10 Not only did British soldiers have disdain for the colonists where they were lodging but they also, in their free time, were going out getting part time jobs and they were taking work away from the Colonists.

Mercantilism was also another factor: the whole idea that a wealthy nation used its colonies in order to enrich itself and make itself a more powerful nation. That was Britain's attitude toward the colonies. Britain passed a number of navigation laws and trade restrictions that made it possible to enrich Great Britain at the expense of the colonies.

There were other issues of course: the whole issue of taxation without representation, the sense now that their own governments had supremacy in managing local affairs. Also the tension between decentralized government versus strong government appeared. Ideological
20 factors also contributed to why the colonies rebelled, for example John Lock's writings about power in government. And again the importance of media, because ideas like this circulated in print. The power of print was significant in colonial America.

I often remind my students that while we live in a day of internet and instant messaging and everything else, the colonists were reading pamphlets. Pamphlets were one of the most powerful tools for spreading ideas. In that era, people would go to coffee shops and women would go to millenary shops and even circulating libraries would be found in places of business. The ideas that came out of these sessions became the foundation for how to reform the government. Colonists came to believe that power was always opposed to liberty, they see the tension between power and liberty.

30
*“When Governments fear the people there is liberty. When
People fear the government, there is tyranny.”*

Thomas Jefferson

Colonists also came to believe that the government had a responsibility to the people; that, if it did not fulfil that responsibility, they had a right to dissolve that government. So these ideas, this republicanism, infiltrated American political and social culture.

Colonies coming together. By 1774, the colonists had moved toward closer union with one another, a factor that is hard for many students to comprehend because they think of
40 the United States as allied. Students forget how significant the colonial differences were and how significant the regional differences were. To be able to get people who had been used to aligning their thought to Britain to think inter-colonially was a big challenge.

Also of importance were demographic changes. During this period, people were moving more, there was more movement among colonies, and as that happened people were getting to know one another; they were exchanging ideas. By 1774, when the first Continental Congress met, the colonists were debating their relationship to Great Britain. 55

delegates came from all of the colonies, except for Georgia, and approved a boycott. They also sent a declaration of rights and grievances to the king and called for colonists in Massachusetts to arm themselves. Boston was a very critical area, moving closer and closer toward revolution. There was a clash on Lexington Green between the colonial militia and the British army and there were a number of other clashes, like the Boston massacre. Historians love to debate who fired the first shot at Lexington.

When the second Colonial Congress convened in 1775, King George III declared the colonists in a state of rebellion. The Colonies began to prepare for war, and appointed George Washington as the commander of the army. During this time, Thomas Paine the great pamphleteer, wrote the pamphlet "Common Sense." His pamphlet was very much in demand and was reprinted, 26 editions in one year. A receptive audience and powerful ideas were coming together to prepare people to rebel for independence. Paine said then that "government, even in the best state, is but a necessary evil." That became common dialogue among people as they talked about the situation.

Then of course came the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson the slaveholder. In the preamble, Jefferson put forth the basic ideas about having the right to rebel, stating the reason for independence. The Declaration sights specific grievances that the colonists had against Britain and also issued the colonial declaration of war.

The Colonists were affirming the idea that government originates in the consent of the governed. And they were upholding their right to overthrow that government as unjust, as not fulfilling its responsibilities.

At this point, the colonists had to take sides. By breaking down the colonies, you understand why there were so many different factions. Among the colonists were many people who remained loyal to Britain, "the loyalists," in pockets in certain portions of the country. Great Britain planed their war depending on where the loyalists were.

It's clear that slavery was inconsistent with the idea of liberty expounded in the Declaration of Independence. And this of course was in the eyes of the slaveholders as well as the slaves. Women's status also was seen as inconsistent with the ideas expounded in the Declaration of Independence. And there was the whole issue of ethnic tensions within the colonies and the tension Quakers had as pacifists.⁵

Outcomes of the Revolutionary War. As for the outcomes, there were many: the political outcome was independence. Also the boundaries of the United States were defined with Canada and the great lakes to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Florida to the south, Mississippi to the west. The Native Americans who were living in that western portion of this land were rather appalled to hear that their land had been given to the U.S. Some had aligned with Great Britain but even so, they were appalled to find out theirs was given away this way. Also stemming from this period is the implementation of the republican political experiment after the discovery of the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation - their original form of government - which gave most power to the colonies and less power to the central government.

⁵ Author's note: One of the things I do in class is divide into the British and the Americans and then I have them list their advantages and their disadvantages in fighting this war. And virtually every time they are shocked at how many advantages the British had and why they didn't win the war. So it's kind of a nice comparative exercise.

In terms of social outcomes, the churches were disestablished. Support for churches from the state was stopped. In fact Thomas Jefferson wrote the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom in 1786, outlining more tolerance for different religious beliefs. There was the changing sense of identity, of being American rather than British, which took some time. There was the idea of equality that has permeated society to this day.

Women had taken a great part in the war. They began to regard themselves as equals with their husbands. Prior to this time, women were not widely educated in the colonies, perhaps elementary school level at most. But with the revolution came the idea that women needed to be well educated in order to be good companions to their husbands, so they could
10 discuss politics with their husbands and so they could raise their children to be good citizens. More rested on a mutual respect and affection, where previously there had been a lot of concern about property and what property you brought to the marriage and so forth.

Then there were also new ways of thinking about race. Americans had to confront the whole question of racial slavery. In the northern colonies, there was a move to the gradual emancipation of slaves; there were beliefs of groups like the Quakers and there were economic factors. In the north, slavery was not as critical a form of labor, for example. But part of this struggle also focused on the whole idea of democracy permeating society; of equality, so some Americans moved toward supporting gradual emancipation.

The most important losers in the American Revolution are the Native Americans, who
20 not only lost the right to their land, but who also would have to face expansion by the settlers and continued conflicts and efforts to overcome them.

Unanswered questions. The issue of slavery was not resolved by the Revolutionary War. Even though the northern colonies were starting a move to gradual emancipation, the states in the south were not. For some of the slaves, both the British and the Americans promised them freedom. Also during the American Revolution, some slaves were able to escape to the back country and found freedom in that way.⁶

There was also the unresolved issue of the kind of republic would we be? Who would be entitled to vote? It took us a long time in the United States to answer these questions. Women did not get the right to vote until 1920, including African American women.

Early Republic. During the early post-Revolutionary War period, a new set of state
30 constitutions expanded the power of state governments. It also took six years to establish a national government. It was first proposed in 1776, and the Articles of Confederation were ratified in 1781. But it was a very loose disorganisation, decentralised power with many limitations.

Government during this post-war period faced a number of challenges. First, there was a post-war economic depression. The Articles of Confederation did not convey a lot of power in terms of taxation or regulation of trade, further complicating the situation. Then there was this whole question of how we would sell or distribute new land west of the

⁶ Author's note: When we teach American history there's this whole issue of looking at groups of populations of victims in the American experience. The historiography is really emphasising the agency of individual groups. And so when we talk about Native Americans, there can be a tendency to treat them as victims. But looking at their cultural identity, you can see its complexity. You start to look at them as actors in their own story, not as victims. The same is true with the slave population after the American Revolution, you look at them and you see them taking their freedom, running away, earning their freedom through serving.

Appalachian Mountains. There were diplomatic problems and minor revolts within the states by some, like Revolutionary War veterans, who went back home thinking they should be entitled to some land or some pensions.

Constitutional Convention. The flaws in the original government showed that a stronger Federal Government was necessary. When delegates met in Philadelphia the first question was whether to revise or replace the articles of confederation? And it was through a series of compromises that they came up with an acceptable document, the US Constitution, serving us to this day.

10 Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton had two different ideas about the nation's future. Jefferson, even though he was a wealthy planter, envisioned a nation of small farmers. He believed that if you owned land, you would have a vested interest in your government and therefore you would be interested in participating politically. Jefferson envisioned this as white land owners, of course. Alexander Hamilton was, meantime, more focussed on manufacturing and commerce in the future of the country. Hamilton emphasised building up cities and business and industry rather than a nation of small farmers. Despite these differences of vision, there was a peaceful transfer of power when George Washington's first term ended in 1800.

20 Slavery, the "pernicious abstraction," and Thomas Jefferson. As Governor of Virginia during the American Revolution, Jefferson supported the broadening of land ownership as the basis of political and social stability. He himself was an elite planter with thousands of acres of land, and was one of the wealthiest land owners in Virginia. His wealth was calculated in terms of property, both land and slaves. By the time of his death in 1822 he owned 267 slaves, according to the inventory.

I should mention that there's a myth about slavery in the United States, about plantations, that all plantations were big. I think this myth is based on "Gone with the Wind" that presents a large plantation with a hundred or more slaves. In reality that was probably only about 10% of the slave owning south. There were many smaller plantations, with only 15 or 20 slaves and many, what we call Yeoman farmers, who owned land but were not elite or privileged. They might 30 have had one slave each. In those cases, the slave was living with them, working with them, eating with them. Jefferson, as I mentioned, had 267 slaves when he died, and was not opposed to using cruel forms of punishment with his slaves.

And yet there was a certain conflict within him about slavery. He recommended gradual emancipation but that was problematic. He personally felt guilty. He believed slavery had a "pernicious influence" -- to use his phrase -- on masters and their children. And there was the whole question of whether Thomas Jefferson had children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemmings. Because of modern science and DNA analysis, there is now proof that Jefferson's genes were passed on to the descendants of Sally Hemmings. But that's still not conclusive evidence because Jefferson's nephew also stayed on the plantation, so there's 40 still that slight possibility that the genes came from his nephew and not Jefferson. Nonetheless, that illustrates a dynamic on plantations; the whole dynamic of power and race.

Interestingly, Sally Hemmings was Jefferson's wife's half-sister. Hemmings's father was a slave owner who impregnated one of his slaves. Sally Hemmings was the child of the same father as Jefferson's wife, so they were half-sisters.

The challenge for Jefferson the pragmatist was what to do with one and a half million people? Jefferson did not believe that blacks and whites could co-exist in North America.⁷ He believed that there was a difference in intellectual levels between whites and blacks, as well as the color difference. When one of the first African American poets, Phyllis Wheatley, sent a volume of her poetry to Jefferson, he dismissed it with: “white people put her up to this.” Benjamin Banneker, who was an African American mathematician, also wrote to Jefferson. It is interesting to read his very eloquent arguments about equality. But Jefferson just could not accept them and ultimately he feared some kind of a race war would happen in North America if the two races continued to co-exist.

10 Jefferson believed the only solution was to send blacks back to Africa very gradually. He actually calculated how much it would cost and how long it would take. And because he didn't want to undercut the economy of the south, he calculated 25 years to systematically send the slaves back to Africa, and that the slave population would double in the meantime. He estimated that this would represent four or five hundred million dollars worth of property that would be leaving the south. He also looked at the cost it would take to transport and provision the slaves who were being expatriated. Jefferson concluded that it would be too expensive, so his solution was to expatriate the children of the slaves: take the babies away from their mothers, raise them until they're old enough and send them back that way. The cost of a child was less than the value of an adult. During this time, Jefferson was thinking
20 about the economy and not about the humanity of it all, about taking children away from their mothers and so forth.

The point about Thomas Jefferson is, while he was a human being and did great things, he also had clay feet.

South African Reflection by UNISA Professor Greg Cuthbertson

PROF. CUTHBERTSON Dr Passet's presentation on colonial and early national American history draws on much of the new thinking about the making of the United States, which has been percolating for the last 15 or so years.

30 Especially since the journal of American history began its assault on “exceptionalism”: [that is,] thinking of the US as an exceptional society in the 1990's and probably earlier than that.

I warmly recommend Thomas Bender's edited collection called “Re-thinking American History in a Global Age”. It's attractive to South African teachers of US history, because it encourages an outside-in approach, one which explores Latin American and continental European impulses, as well as African diaspora influences in the establishment of the new republic in what became the United States and the nation later that was to follow, in terms of its federal states.

40 In Dr Passet's analysis I detect some of these world history trends and I enjoyed those aspects. And I would refer to her presentation almost as an inside-out interpretation which contextualises and re-Americanises the colonial history of the US by emphasising Spanish, French and Dutch exploration and colonisation. She also emphasised Native American resistance and Central American influences. So I think there's a great deal in terms of an inside-out point of view.

⁷ Ronald Tokai (sic).

Comparative US South African history, despite the shortcomings, represent a way of engaging with America from the vantage point of Pretoria. We can after all relate to Dutch colonisation and the clash of cultures it sparked in both societies. Native American resistance can for example be understood in the light of the conquest of the Koi-San in Cape history and the experiences of the northern and eastern frontiers. Slavery does provide a way of understanding different colonial economies and the different legal systems which define slave status in peculiar ways.

The second thing I want to look at is debates around multiculturalism.

10 Perhaps we can think of multi-culturalism as an invitation to look at what has always been there, a cluttered state of interdependent and highly diverse people shaped by the consequences of five centuries of interaction in the new world. And with some modification that description applies equally to Southern Africa.

Another point I want to refer to is that when we look at the American colonies we ask fundamentally how free were they? Aren Fogelman (sic) deepened our understanding of the important role of servitude in the immigration of Africans to all the English colonies of North America in the era of the American Revolution. For him, coming to America, actually entailed a loss of freedom for many, not liberty.

20 Another resonant feature for Southern African students, the Anglo Dutch wars of the 17th Century, suggest a lot of comparative possibilities for South African scholarship as well as the possibility to think about the American colonies in terms of larger imperial networks.

Recent new research on empire has invited South African historians to rethink imperial history no less than American scholars. Anne Stola (sic), among others, have focussed attention on what she calls the tense and tender ties, the politics of comparison in North America and post-colonial studies, a piece that she published in the journal of American history in 2001. But her larger work with Frederick Cooper has been very influential among Southern Africanists. I suspect
30 that her writing is perhaps less well-known in the US. But importantly for our discussion here she prompts students of colonialism to pay more attention to early American history and to work on the tensions of empire, which US historians have long produced. This is the value of Dr Passet's lecture, it vividly tells of conflicting loyalties and explains why British subjects dare to become rebels. Her focus is consistently on the tensions of empire.

But to return to Anne Stola, she rightly points out that literature comparing the 18th and 19th Century plantation and slave societies of the old south with those in British, Dutch and French colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean is much richer than for early America. Which is probably why South African courses in US
40 history have tended in the past 30 years to concentrate on the post-1776 era and even more on the post-1812 war. Because slavery comes to the fall and that's the point of articulation for South African scholars.

In responding to the British empire, the emerging American elite chose to reject cosmopolitanism, much as the Dutch settlement of the Cape retreated from international networks during the 18th Century as well and fractured politically when it encountered British rule at the beginning of the 19th. Repulsing the British

in 1812 epitomised republicanism's claim to sovereignty over what it meant to be American. But as Robert Viva has contended, systematising citizenship was not uncomplicated and he identifies, I think, three very interesting solutions to the problems, which mass migration created. The first, he said, ran from family to ethnicity to nationalism. The second solution, from working life to class to socialism. And the third, from public life to citizenship to democracy.

When I first began lecturing American history more than 25 years ago, the narrative was simply one that was borrowed from US writers and our ambition was simply to teach it as well as the Americans. Gradually however, in the context of the struggle to end Apartheid, US history provided a way, I think, of exploring experiences of oppression, racism and the campaign for civil rights, which meant that we taught American history as if it was South African history. Not surprisingly, after 1994 we have begun to think more globally and that's what I've been talking about because of our re-articulation with the international community and more particularly, re-articulating with our continent of Africa. We have therefore begun to teach Africa in diasporan frameworks and America as part of world history.

Our take on globalising American history is naturally different from that proposed by many US historians. We sometimes construct America in different ways, sometimes it suits us to construct it as the whole continent, North and South America, when we want to assert a south-south political alignment, especially given the apparent political and economic likeness with Brazil for example, itself the subject of much comparative historical writing in the 1980's and 1990's. At other times it suits us to reduce America to the nation of the United States, because we seek accountability for the consequences of that country's actions, supporting regimes in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, progressive political prospects in Iran, Guatemala and Chile, ignoring Genocide in Rwanda and Sudan and waging a wasting war in Iraq.

We perceive an unbridled nationalism behind American imperialism, which demands that we teach US history both as nation and as empire. This year, for the first time in my long teaching career, I have introduced a post-graduate course on American imperialism, because it is actually our experience of the US. And therefore I see the sense of Louis Pereth Junior's remarks at the end of his review of Thomas Bender's rethinking American history in a global age. He says: "If the end result of internationalising American history serves to foster a new historiography of self-absorption, through which to restore the nation to its place of privilege in the form of triumphant exceptionalism as the sole reigning world superpower, little will have been gained and much lost". Thank you.

Question and answer session

QUESTION: For Professor Passet. From a South African perspective, if we look at our history we come from a very shameful past, yet we are people who have immense pride. I think our national flag is symbolic of that pride reflecting the diversity in this country. So my question is basically, if you can maybe draw a similar analysis [about pride and flags in the U.S.] and where they fit into the

history that you've just explained.

PROF. PASSET: I find that to be an interesting comment because I would say a similar thing about the United States: We have a very complex history with many things that we're not proud of and yet Americans are very proud. And the flag is an amazing symbol, for example, after the 9/11 attack on World Trade Towers. Within a few hours people were driving all through the small community in which I live, with these flags affixed to their cars.

QUESTION: For Professor Passet: How can you [answer the question] "Wasn't American wealth built on slavery?" And then what about these richest families in America, did they not accumulate their wealth during slavery?

PROF. PASSET: Even though people did not own slaves, they were complicit in the system of slavery. Even Quakers who were active in the anti-slavery movement in the period before the civil war were merchants. If you were a merchant you might be trading goods that were slave produced. Now some Quakers took steps to avoid that but anyone involved in shipping, any kind of business [reflects some level of] complicity because they were supporting a system on which slavery was the foundation. If you look at the early [period], seven presidents came from Virginia and most of them, if not all, from wealthy slave owning families. So it's not even just the issue of their wealth but politics, world views, the shaping of the government, that came from these families who owned slaves.

And in our country, periodically there are discussions of reparations but then there's the question of how can you ever make up for enslaving that much of the population. It's a controversial issue.

QUESTION: Two questions for Professor Passet. One is the role of Christianity on America's state and politics. The other is whether the notion of multiculturalism isn't also masking more antagonistic racial conflicts in America but are just being viewed as a cultural context, because it's less provocative and less political in its consequences?

PROF. PASSET: I'm not a historian of religion so I have to actually invite anyone else who can contribute to the first question to chime in. I think there's a difference between thinking about Christian values -- the world view of the founders -- versus specific beliefs. New England was more strictly religious in terms of puritans and all. The literature, the culture was permeated with an essence of Christianity. Thomas Jefferson and others of the founders were in fact Deists [who placed] less emphasis on one god and more of an emphasis on more universal [principles]. [Deism] shaped the ideas of the founders, so [the Constitution] is not strictly a religious document, but it's informed by these Christian values that shaped the culture. The question of separation of church and state I find very difficult. Because of the early churches being established. And even though we have separation of church and state, there's still very close connections culturally. So there's a legal separation but I think it's impossible to effect a cultural separation.

The teaching of history in a multicultural way is also controversial. We're deconstructing what everyone felt comfortable with as the history of the United States and some people feel that we [have lost] a cohesive narrative as a result. On the other hand, other people are welcoming the opportunity to feel included in the

history. Multiculturalism is a phase historiographically that we need to go through in order to rewrite a narrative that is more inclusive.⁸

QUESTION: For Doctor Passet my first question is: What was the reaction of the state in terms of suppressing some of the [enlightenment] ideas which were coming out? Then, the fact that you are owned by a big farmer or owned by a small farmer, did it really have an impact on your status as a slave? And third is on the revolution. From the Southern African perspective or an African perspective it appears to have been a revolution that went the wrong way. Instead of the contenders of liberation being the Native population, the contenders of independence are actually part and parcel of the conquering group and change group. So what would you say on that?

PROF. PASSET: Okay, thank you for some good questions. First, we have a strong tradition reinforced in our Bill of Rights of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and so forth. A lot of this goes back to the colonial period when the printers were printing the newspapers, pamphlets, government documents.

Second, about slave owners... The large plantations would vary depending on the nature of the crop produced and on whether the land owner was an absentee landlord and relying on an overseer. So you can't even generalise about conditions for slaves on large plantations. Absentee landlords tended to go more toward the gang system of labor where there's more cruelty, because the master is not there to oversee the overseer, who could be white or black.

Living in a small household side by side like a hired labourer [experiencing] the same quality of living conditions [had advantages], only you were there for life. But on the other hand you were isolated, separated from people who you shared culture and religion with.

You [can] look at the class structure in American society as a pyramid, with the slaves at the bottom. Slaves were the broadest part of the triangle. Then there would be a class of whites who were not land owners, then there would be the Yeoman farmers, then there would be businessmen and a very tiny portion of the planter elite at the top. It was the elites' concern that this whole structure would be destabilised by the whites and the bottom portion of the triangle. And so that's why they had to work so hard and use the tool of racism to make sure that the whites on that lower portion were not allying themselves with the slaves. But these whites actually had more in common with the slaves than they did with the people on the top part.

Third, about the revolution going the wrong way... Native Americans sided in many instances with the British. And so in a way I think they feel that they were betrayed by the British because of the British ceding their land to the Americans.

⁸ Editor's note: discussion centering on the internationalization of American Studies and American Imperialism can be accessed on the American Studies pages of the Cultural Affairs Section webpage. On the internet at usembassypretoria.com